

Pre-Columbian Studies of Ritual and Religion: Place, Power, Practice and Ontology [book review]

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Abstract:

This essay reviews the following works:

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The Archaeology of Wak'as: Explorations of the Sacred in the Pre-Columbian Andes. Edited by Tamara Bray. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2014. Pp. xvi + 403. \$70.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781607323174.

The Power of Huacas: Change and Resistance in the Andean World of Colonial Peru. By Claudia Brosseder. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015. Pp. xi + 456. \$65.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780292756946.

Ancient Zapotec Religion: An Ethnohistorical and Archaeological Perspective. By Michael Lind. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015. Pp. xviii + 386. \$70.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781607323730.

Inca Sacred Space: Landscape, Site and Symbol in the Andes. Edited by Frank Meddens, Katie Willis, Colin McEwan, and Nicholas Branch. London: Archetype Publications, 2014. Pp. vii + 309. £65.00 paper. ISBN: 9781909492059.

Maya Imagery, Architecture, and Activity: Space and Spatial Analysis in Art History. Edited by Maline D. Werness-Rude and Kaylee R. Spencer. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015. Pp. xiv + 426. \$75.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780826355799.

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BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

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Until recently, archaeologists have been reticent to examine the meaning of ritual and religion. Religion was considered by many (i.e., Marxists and materialists) to be epiphenomenal or beyond what is knowable with material remains.¹ Instead, archaeologists approached religion from the perspective of cross-cultural analysis, where ideology played the role of commanding resources or legitimizing elite power. Efforts to understand the meaning of religious symbols or ritual practice have largely been pursued by archaeologists who could reference historical texts. The works reviewed here largely fall into that category and also include the contributions of historians, ethnographers, and art historians regarding cosmology and ontology in the autochthonous Americas. These scholars rely on ethnohistorical accounts or surviving glyphic texts and codices. At the same time, they engage the tangible remains of place or representations of place to anchor their interpretations in the material world, which means their work may be viewed in light of archaeological theory.

The publications reviewed here employ place in different ways to interpret the past. The major difference in approach falls along the etic-emic divide. The more traditional approach takes the etic perspective or that of the observer, as when archaeologists make inferences as outsiders. The focus is to document patterns,

¹ Christopher Hawkes, "Archeological Theory and Method: Some Suggestions from the Old World," *American Anthropologist* 56, no. 2 (1954): 155–168.

identify key attributes, or examine the role of places based on features that can be modeled, tested, and confirmed with material evidence.² The emic perspective is that of the subject or society under study. The goal is to understand what places, symbols, or practices might mean to the participant or group. The objective is to make inferences from the perspective of insiders. This poses problems for archaeologists examining prehistoric societies, because ascertaining the meaning of symbols or other features of ritual and religion without the ability to interview subjects or review written sources is challenging, at best, and may require untenable assumptions about cultural continuity over centuries or millennia.

Many archaeologists continue to work from an etic perspective but are becoming more comfortable integrating emic understandings, which in Mesoamerica are derived from accumulating notions based on a growing corpus of translated glyphs, interpretations of representational imagery, and ethnohistorical sources; or in the case of the Andes are largely derived from Inca ethnohistory of specific locations and the ethnographic record. The concept of place, its design, its durability, its location in the community, and its relation to the landscape are integral to both etic and emic explorations of ritual, cosmology, and ontology.

The most broadly accepted approach is grounded in materialist ideas and assumes that places are designed to represent or communicate nonverbal messages including tenets of dominant ideologies. For example, the construction of platforms facilitates the elevation of persons, which may communicate their higher position in society. This etic approach focuses on patterns and typically forms the basis for all studies of place; however, this method has been criticized because its application often treats the built environment as a static entity with a solitary meaning.

A more dynamic perspective, synonymous with practice theory, views places as “structuring structures” that permit and limit activities, either consciously by their design or regardless of original intent.³ Thus, places are culturally constructed and as such are locked in dialectical engagement with people in their daily lives. Activities are constrained but negotiable, which could stimulate changes in practice and renovations of places. This approach emphasizes the role of the built environment in social production and reproduction.⁴ Advocates of this perspective may focus on changes in the design of houses, communities, or public architecture. These studies often rely on etic observations but acknowledge the impact places have on activity and interaction.⁵ The design of structures may also be linked to specific meanings, cosmology, or ideology, and changes in form may be attributed to specific shifts in ideas and practices.

A related perspective, which emphasizes the significance of emic understandings, questions Western ontologies and considers the agency of nonhuman participants in society. Places in the landscape, buildings, or objects of various kinds may have been viewed as entities with agency in the realm of human interactions. This idea is gaining momentum among Latin American scholars and builds on a growing corpus of discourse in Mesoamerica and the Andes. As exciting as this new approach may be, it appears to be most substantial when supported by etic lines of evidence. This is particularly important because ethnohistorical records are generally filtered through nonnative speakers, changes in the meaning of religious icons can take place relatively rapidly as a result of colonial entanglements, and the selection of symbols and messages built into places may be intentionally multivocal to facilitate sociopolitical relations. For this review, I highlight how the authors leverage remains and representations of place to gain a better understanding of religious belief in the Latin American past. I start with those pertaining to Mesoamerica.

In *Ancient Zapotec Religion*, Michael Lind presents details from ethnohistory regarding Zapotec deities, features of cosmology, the calendar, royal ancestors, the nature of kingship, the roles of different kinds of priests, and the nature of ritual practice in different settings to interpret the remains of temples, palaces, and religious art. He focuses on the Postclassic period (900–1521 CE), during which many Zapotec city-states occupied a large portion of what is now Oaxaca, Mexico. Lind describes how rulers of city-states derived their royal prerogatives through religious sanction and engaged the supernatural in several ways. Interestingly, the leaders of Zapotec city-states legitimized their prerogatives with the possession of a sacred bundle, which they venerated and “fed” with offerings. As I describe below, this practice parallels Andean beliefs associated with *huaca*.

Lind suggests that religion and leadership were intertwined and likely prescribed the design of sites, the placement of buildings, the locations of shrines and the composition of murals. These assertions are

² Jerry Moore, *Architecture and Power in the Ancient Andes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

⁴ Denise Lawrence and Setha Low, “The Built Environment and Spatial Form,” *Annual Reviews in Anthropology* 19 (1990): 453–505.

⁵ Donna Nash, “Vernacular versus State Housing in the Wari Empire,” in *Vernacular Architecture in the Pre-Columbian Andes*, ed. Christina Halperin and Lauren Schwartz (London: Routledge, 2017).

supported by investigations from several sites, including Mitla. Lind peoples the temples and palaces with leaders, priests, and visitors and describes how ritual gatherings, offerings, and daily activities may have transpired. Lind's narrative links place to elements of cosmology and religious practice; however, he largely sticks to an etic perspective and ties changes in architecture to shifts in message, practice, belief, and sociopolitical interactions with other groups.

In *Social Identities in the Classic Maya Northern Lowlands*, Traci Ardren echoes many of these ideas and presents case studies from archaeological sites located in Yucatán, Mexico, to champion a "social imaginary" approach.⁶ She employs the concept of circulation⁷ to explain how shared identities are constituted and materialized, in part, through the engagement with places. Her studies employ emic perspectives but rely on tangible patterns observed in the archaeological record.

Chunchucmil is an urban center located in a semiarid zone, twenty-seven kilometers from the Gulf coast. At its height (400–600 CE), the population may have exceeded forty thousand. The area around the city was not ideal for agriculture, and thus Chunchucmil may have flourished due to trade. Ardren (44) argues that the shared landscape of the city and "ritualized daily practices performed by all members of a society" created a shared social imaginary that mediated a diverse material culture. Low stone walls outline house lots at Chunchucmil, a choice specific to the city's residents rather than a common regional pattern. Also, since elite quadrangles (used for exclusive gatherings) follow the same spatial arrangement as modest housing, Ardren (28) argues for a "conceptual unity between the ruling population and the ruled." At the same time, house lots exhibit a diversity of material culture. Ardren suggests that people living in the core of the city used pottery and other resources that were drawn from trade partners in different regions. She interprets these as "identity markers" with pottery styles and other prestige/display goods reflecting trade affiliations. She suggests that "identity markers" "took on greater importance as midlevel household groups within the epicenter of the city, whose occupants were largely dependent upon trade and other nonagricultural activities, struggled to position themselves within a varied population of similar merchants" (34).

Ardren considers childhood and its emic associations for the Classic Maya. Burial patterns differ but fall within three general categories: inclusion in family crypts below house floors, as partial inclusions in the burials of others, and the interment of the very young in urns, some of which were incorporated in the construction of platforms and underlying shrines. The difference of context is significant. Children buried under house floors maintain their identity in death as specific members of a kin group; however, infants included with other types of offerings during construction, or placed thereafter, may take on more generalized identities. Ardren explains that children, especially the young, held special status because of their remaining proximity to the underworld (from which they recently emerged) and this was represented by the inclusion of seashells in their interments. Thus, children in themselves may have represented a place (the watery underworld) and as inclusions in monumental architecture, which were thought of as animate places, may have been part of the "ensoulment" process. In a sense, family crypts in domestic constructions may have also "ensouled" residential structures through the inclusion of burials or curated bones in the construction fill along with other offerings.

Ardren's narratives about the social imaginary emphasize the role of places as structuring structures, and engage Maya ontology to explain practices represented by material remains. Her analyses are largely based on patterned, etic observations but also rely on emic insights from ethnohistory, glyphic texts, and representative iconography to ascribe some meaning to artifacts, architecture, and actions.

The authors collected in *Maya Imagery, Architecture, and Activity*, edited by Maline D. Werness-Rude and Kaylee R. Spencer, examine artifacts, architecture, murals, friezes, orientations, and connections between buildings via *sacbe* (paved roads) to approach emic conceptions among the Classic Maya. The book takes a predominantly art-historical approach; the dialogue between artist (or patron) and audience is often explicit. Several chapters explore the connections between mythical places and the built environment and how cosmology played a leading role in the organization of space, the content of art programs, and the manner of construction in some buildings. The most striking example of this is Michael D. Carrasco's description of the addition of unnecessary beams to support the roof vault, which was conceptualized as the arms and carapace of a turtle (Werness-Rude and Spencer, 388–390).

The three-part cosmos of the Maya is represented by plants and animals associated with the different realms (underworld; earth, sometimes a turtle; and sky). Specific species could be used to invoke mythical

⁶ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁷ Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, "Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 191–213.

places, whereas motifs such as trees, water, or caves could represent conduits between realms. In separate chapters, Maline D. Werness-Rude, Michele M. Bernatz, and Penny Steinbach discuss these conventions. Each of the three realms extended horizontally from a marked center (axis mundi) toward the four cardinal directions. This configuration is seemingly replicated by the central hearth and four support beams of many houses, the placement of structures around plazas, and in two dimensions with a variation of the quincunx.

Iconography and architecture (real and depicted) were used together to locate illustrated figures in specific places. Such scenes could be configured to include the observer by manipulating depth of field, such as the murals of Bonampak, or with elevated platforms, sunken courts, and staircases, such as the East Court at Palenque. Some of the authors consider how individuals would have experienced these features. For instance, Flora Simmons Clancy describes a shift in public engagement between the Preclassic and Classic periods (Werness-Rude and Spencer, chap. 5). She associates the mask reliefs that framed plazas with passive engagement, whereas the three-dimensional stelae placed in plazas during the Classic period required active engagement to view these monuments in the round.

Elizabeth Drake Olton (Werness-Rude and Spencer, chap. 7) and Carrasco (epilogue) suggest a different kind of active engagement. Olton describes how the features of Jasaw Chan K'awiil's tomb (Temple 1, Tomb 116) at Tikal may have been replicated in the shrine atop the pyramid so that Jasaw's son and successor, Yik'in Chan K'awiil (734–746 CE), who completed the building project, could communicate with his father buried underneath the structure. Features of the underlying tomb and the superstructure shrine exhibit many parallels. The shrine has three doorways with carved lintels, but the imagery would have been difficult to observe by firelight in situ. Yet, the two portraits of the dead king engraved on the lintel may have been situated so that the deceased king as ancestral spirit could float above the head of his son. Together, the person and lintel replicated scenes on earlier stelae, such as Tikal's stela 31 (ca. 411–456 CE), and may represent the conjuring of the royal ancestor, especially since excavations of the thresholds show these were areas of focused ritual activity (Werness-Rude and Spencer, chap. 7).

A similar feature is found in House E at Palenque, which Carrasco suggests represents a “heavenly place.” The painted imagery on walls, doorways, and adjacent rooms suggests that movement through these spaces may have replicated the ability of rulers to move between realms. Originally built and dedicated by K'inich Janab Pakal (ca. 654 CE), the space was used for the accessions of later kings. The Oval Tablet shows the presentation of a headdress with symbols of royalty to Pakal by his mother. This relief is situated above a carved bench (Del Rio Throne) in such a way as to create “a composition that would allow for the virtual crowning of the sitter” (Werness-Rude and Spencer, 395). These are just two examples where places are designed to perpetuate significant events. Research presented in *Maya Imagery* shows that places actively communicated ideology and structured activities of many kinds.

As these examples show, researchers working in some areas of Mesoamerica discuss the meaning of specific icons or relate places to aspects of cosmology. Their ability to explore the emic perspective comes from intense study of accounts from early colonial Mexico, as well as the surviving illustrated codices and the growing corpus of glyph-embellished artworks from earlier periods. The Aztec and other Late Postclassic styles have representational iconography, which allows researchers to propose certain similarities. These lines of evidence are largely lacking for the Andes. Inca art is largely geometric. The Inca recorded information using quipu, but thus far only numeric values can be gleaned from these indigenous accounts. Therefore studies exploring the emic perspective are more tentative, and the foundations for these types of interpretations are still being laid. The volumes concerning the Andes in this review bring forward important cosmological concepts, some of which seem to have support from patterned archaeological remains. I begin with colonial history because it is the major source for archaeological interpretations regarding cosmology and ontology.

In *The Power of Huacas*, Claudia Brosseder examines the dialogue between indigenous Andean religious specialists and the Jesuits, who created rich records regarding indigenous beliefs and practices to facilitate extricating them. She shows how Andean and Catholic religion changed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in response to their mutual engagement. For Andean archaeologists, her work provides a cautionary tale regarding the accuracy of valued colonial sources. She highlights several instances where colonial Christian dogma embellishes Inca mytho-history (e.g., Guaman Poma, Murúa, and Molina). Brosseder highlights the contradictions between the two competing cosmologies in the colonial Andes and disentangles aspects of Andean ontology from that of its historical translators. The complexity of this undertaking shows just how daunting it can be to get at emic perspectives, even when subjects are interviewed (i.e., Jesuits interviewing indigenous religious specialists) and detailed historical accounts are available. This diachronic study shows that the meaning of things and places shift over time, whether through strategic efforts or seemingly unconscious choices.

Since Brosseder is working from documents, her perspective on place is not integral to her interpretations; however, she describes how the engagement between Catholic orders and Andean religious specialists had an impact on the design of places and the form of symbols. Clergy purposely integrated elements of Andean religious symbolism into the features of churches and religious iconography because José de Acosta, the Provincial Father in Lima, advocated syncretic strategies to inscribe followers (Brosseder, 159–163). For instance, Pablo José Arriaga, author of *La extirpación de la idolatría en el Perú* (1621), permitted sacred stones to be modified and used as stoups. Representations of Santiago took on new features to coincide more closely with Illapa, the Andean god of lightning (and giver of rain). Santiago's typical scallop shells were changed to spondylus, a valued substance used in Andean rituals called *mollo*, which represented water. Saints Thomas and Francis were depicted with wings, which associated them with the transformed beings of Andean myth. Also, many churches were built using white stones. This may have been intentional given the power attributed to “white things” in Andean ritual.

Brosseder also describes how ontological differences on the nature of things was a challenge. The contrast between embodiment and representation was particularly salient. A formidable conundrum for Jesuit missionaries was explaining to indigenous converts (or religious specialists accused of sorcery) the difference between the worship of huacas and the adorations of saints via their representations. To Andean peoples, huacas embodied power. Carved objects of wood or stone did not represent powerful entities; they were aspects of those entities, who were partible. Huacas, like Inca rulers, could embody multiple things. In the case of the Inca, they could have stone brothers or be manifest in a *bulto* (bundle of cloth filled with things such as hair and nail clippings), either of which could serve as “stand-ins” during battles, rituals, or diplomatic visits. A huaca might be a mountain (or other landscape feature), a carved stone, wooden statue, or even be contained in a small stone taken from the original. Thus, when priests used huacas to make a stoup, they were, in a sense, whether they realized it or not, transforming the church into that huaca. This attribute of huacas meant they were not easily destroyed. As Carolyn Dean and Frank M. Meddens both describe, huacas could also be transferred from one stone to another via a textile (Bray, 224 and 255). These aspects of Andean ontology may have ensured its resilience in the colonial period.

Brosseder (84) takes a very broad view of huaca. Based on “the principles of specific embodied powers,” she includes “coca leaves, different colored powders, different colored maize, *villca*, San Pedro cactus, beans, and spiders,” as well as “*yllas*,” which “were stone figures in the shape of corncocks, llamas, and toads (today called *conopas* in the central and southern highlands), ... *zanco*, herbs, *cuys*, and items of white color.” This goes beyond the ideas expressed in the other works under review. Huacas are usually named entities such as Pariacaca, or Catequil, who were entrusted with the fortunes of communities, but may include portable objects such as yllas, which are considered the guardians of specific households, much like Lind describes for royal Zapotec bundles. In contrast, the other substances listed by Brosseder are often “fed” to such entities to maintain reciprocal relations. Perhaps this distinction is superfluous and derived from Western ontology. The term *huaca* might have been considered something equivalent to “sacred,” an adjective, rather than “sacred thing,” a noun. In *The Archaeology of Wak'as*, edited by Tamara Bray, the referent of *huaca* (spelled here *wak'a*) is considered at length because of its great significance for understanding Inca cosmology and ontology.

In her introductory chapter, Bray uses early colonial sources to define *huaca* as “an idol, statue, or image (*ídolo*; *bulto*), or an oratory or shrine-like place (*adoratorio*), with the two typically closely linked” (5). Bruce Mannheim and Guillermo Salas Carreño explore this attribution through language and practice which creates sentient entities. As with relations among human beings, they conclude that huacas are constituted through care, feeding, and cohabitation. The landscape is not necessarily animate but is filled with specifically named place-persons of varying power, which have social agency through their engagements. At the same time, Mannheim and Salas are specifically considering *huaca* as a “term of art” developed through South American archaeology and the ontological implications of its development primarily in English, even when it appears in Spanish. In so doing they leave other ideas that might assign agency or extend the notion of *huaca* to “attributes and events as well as things” to future research (Bray, 65). Ontological consideration characterizes most chapters in the book, some of which are complemented by etic observations of place.

For example, Krzysztof Makowski describes the massive Inca constructions at the important oracle of Pachacamac, and features of the nearby site of Pueblo Viejo-Pucará. Through his work we get a better sense of which complexes were autochthonous and which features of the pilgrimage center were Inca. It seems the Inca completely transformed the character of Pachacamac and imposed a different design, which would have changed the way people interacted with the oracle.

At a different scale, Steve Kosiba describes how the Inca added huacas (many of which were natural outcropping enclosed by a wall) in the area around Ollantaytambo. These were spaced throughout the landscape. The enclosure of huacas suggests that veneration was relatively secluded and involved small groups of people. It seems these new huacas were treated in a fashion similar to earlier local ancestral burials. The huacas essentially served as Inca ancestors and helped claim the landscape on their part. In a similar vein, Carolyn Dean examines *huanca*, which are standing stones (or minimally modified stelae) that served as huaca marking territorial use rights. In the Inca period, stone seats also fulfilled this role because they were positioned to “see” and claim lands or other resources. She recounts an Inca origin myth where one of the original eight Inca (Ayar Inca) sat on a stone and became petrified at the place where the Coricancha was later built. Dean relates seeing and sitting to claims of possession. Further, such seats may have been incomplete without a sitter but represented particular sitters (and may have retained their essence) and marked specific events of sitting. Together these papers provide good examples of how Inca ancestors and emperors were lithified, providing durable claims to the lands and labor in newly conquered territories.

Likewise, John W. Janusek is concerned with lithic beings. His paper is one of two chapters that considers the possible antiquity of huaca. Janusek discusses the carved stone figures of the Late Formative (ca. 1–500 CE) in the Lake Titicaca Basin. He echoes Mannheim and Salas and provides a rich narrative of the means by which mountains, monoliths, and people were constituted through repeated ritual encounters that engaged the landscape in a “pragmatic ecology” and provided the setting for shifting ontologies. Farther to the north, Anita G. Cook is interested in identifying huacas in the Wari Empire (ca. 500–1000 CE) and their predecessors in the previous period (ca. 200–500 CE). She uses representations of buildings to suggest that some structures may have been or enclosed place-persons. Two ceramic models of architectural compounds show buildings with faces. She also describes an early Tiwanaku textile (ca. 200–400 CE) that depicts a building between converging figures. This central place is usually filled by the staff deity or a bodiless rayed face. The building is “standing in” for a powerful entity. Cook argues that these representations of buildings support the notion that some structures in the Middle Horizon may have been place-persons like those in later Inca times. She suggests that D-shaped temples and their earlier round counterparts, which exhibit many rich offerings, are a prominent candidate for huaca status.

Huacas are not the only significant sacred features in the ancient Andes. In *Inca Sacred Space*, scholars from several disciplines examine *ushnu* as it relates to Inca cosmology. This compilation features a chapter by the late Tom Zuidema, who expands upon his early studies.⁸ His interpretations are drawn from ethnohistorical accounts and bolstered by the archaeological record. Zuidema views *ushnu* as conduits to the underworld and as features that receive liquids. They might be a drain or canal so that libations or burnt offerings might be carried away by water. More simply, *ushnu* may be features that can absorb liquids, and Frank Meddens suggests that highland lakes may have fulfilled this role in some contexts.

Zuidema argues that a platform or stone (huaca) are ancillary; however, all volume authors do not agree.⁹ According to Zuidema, the association of *ushnu* with platform constructions is primarily derived from Guaman Poma and later sources. Guaman Poma illustrates *ushnu* as platforms in his chronicle, but Zuidema believes this was “a witty and satirical commentary on how the Spaniards in his time thought about *ushnu* in Cusco according to their own perception” (Meddens et al., 25). He recounts that during the campaign against the rebellious Tupac Amaru, Viceroy Toledo visited Vilcashuamán, where he ascended the platform as if he were the Inca emperor. Later, upon his return to Cusco, Toledo set up a fake mountain with jungle animals (to simulate the setting of Tupac Amaru in Vilcapampa) and staged a battle where he defeated the Inca king. The Spanish apparently held such battles on a regular basis and would erect a platform in the plaza for such events. Zuidema claims that Guaman Poma was representing the Spanish association of platforms with thrones and Toledo’s desire to take this high place for himself.¹⁰

If Zuidema is correct, *ushnu* may not require a tiered platform, but the Inca built numerous examples outside of Cusco. As Lawrence S. Coben argues, the elevated platform may have been less appropriate in Cusco proper, where the ruling Inca lineages interacted with each other in the use of *ushnu* for libations that likely engaged ancestors (Meddens et al., chap. 11). Non-Inca personnel were excluded from these rites and were banned from Cusco when they took place. In the provinces, state ritual had a different audience;

⁸ R. T. Zuidema, “El *ushnu*,” *Revista de la Universidad Complutense* 28, no. 117 (1980): 317–362.

⁹ The notion that an *ushnu* is a platform feature was popularized by John Hyslop, *Inca Settlement Planning* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), chap. 3.

¹⁰ Guaman Poma also illustrates Toledo sitting with six other officials; Zuidema (Meddens et al., 25) comments they are positioned in such a tiered fashion that they appear as if on an Inca platform. Guaman Poma de Ayala, *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno*, edited by John V. Murra, Rolena Adorno, and Jorge L. Urioste (Madrid: Historia 16, 1987 [1583–1615]).

it seems that the Inca may have built platform/plaza complexes to incorporate groups in imperial ritual of a somewhat different sort, which likely varied between provinces due to variations in local traditions. César Astuhumán, Coben, Gabriel Ramón Joffré, Jean-Pierre Protzen, Cirilo Vivanco Pomacanchari and Marius Ziolkowski describe these various settings and differences in function (in Meddens et al.). Some, but not all ushnu appear to be oriented to make important astronomical observations. Patrice Lecoq and Thibault Saintenoy, Ricardo Moyano, and Zuidema discuss ushnu of this sort and associated ritual practices (in Meddens et al.).

Susan Ramirez suggests that the activities of the Inca as sacred leader, as well as his elite representatives, varied between settings. In her view, ushnu were incomplete without a human intermediary, who represented mountains and connected the living audience with the dead ancestors (in Meddens et al.). This accords well with Dean's discussion (in Bray). Catherine Allen expresses a related view that the person of the Inca was like an ushnu in that they took in liquids, such as *chicha* (a fermented beverage). Chapters by Allen, Denise Y. Arnold, and Carmen Escalante Gutiérrez and Ricardo Valderrama Fernández (in Meddens et al.) describe modern ideas and practices, which seem related to those recorded during the early Colonial period; however, as Arnold's research shows many factors have intervened to transform ideas and practices. Based on ethnographic studies, described by Allen, water (or *chicha* and urine) connects all realms through its flow. The Milky Way as a serpent siphons water from the interior earth. This water falls as rain from the sky to the high mountains. The water flows across the earth and is absorbed once more or flows into the ocean. Ushnu, like springs and lakes in modern times, may have been considered water doors that connected the world of the living with the watery world below.

Colin McEwan's paper explores other elements of Inca cosmology. He describes how the Inca imposed order on the landscape, both in the imperial heartland and conquered regions. Features of this system include concentric spheres, radial lines, and hierarchical ordering. Concentric spheres were marked by places following what McEwan refers to as the "axis of creation," which originated at Lake Titicaca to the southeast and moves toward Cusco (Meddens et al., 30–31). This route parallels the journey of the creator god Viracocha, and the mythical migrations of the eight Inca siblings after they emerged from the caves of Tambotoco to found Cusco. Moving from south to north, the first landmark is the House of the Sun, a temple 160 kilometers from Cusco, the other is Mount Huanacauri, 13 kilometers from the city. These features create three concentric zones that correspond with the three classes of people in the empire. The city represented the Royal Inca Lineages (*Collana*), the area between Mount Haunacauri and the temple (the Sacred Valley) corresponded with Incas by privilege (*Payan*), and the region beyond the temple represented the non-Inca peoples (*Cayao*).

Much has been written about the *ceque* system of Cusco, which consisted of forty-one lines radiating out from the Coricancha (the principal sun temple). These lines were not straight but rather connected series of huacas, which might be mountains, springs, stones, or other features. The veneration of these entities were the responsibility of specific groups, who garnered rights to water, lands, and other resources. McEwan suggests that since sacred stones of various kinds were portable, *ceque* systems could be established in newly conquered areas and thus have been used to incorporate existing sacra, while imposing Inca cosmological order. Kosiba's work seems to show the Inca also used natural features in this process (in Bray).

Rough stones might represent sacred mountains, deities, ancestors, or living Inca emperors. These might be dressed and feted or incorporated in platforms or other sorts of buildings as objects of veneration and perhaps were the source of sacred essence. Astuhumán, McEwan, and Meddens (in Meddens et al.), and Zachary J. Chase (in Bray) report the presence of stones in drains or incorporated in platform-ushnu. It is unclear if these were Inca "ancestors" or local objects incorporated into Inca complexes. It is even possible, as Chase suggests for the region of Huarochiri, that sacred stones were transported by migrants charged with settling new areas for the Inca.

Apparently, soil was also transported. Dennis Ogburn discusses how small stones or soil from a sacred mountain or area around important features might be used to represent the larger entity (in Meddens et al.). This was possible because huacas were partible in the sense that their essence might be maintained in the mountain while also present in a carved figure, or even be fed and venerated in the form of a small unmodified stone. Bray elaborates the features of this alternative ontology in the introduction to her volume, and John R. Topic provides an example in his discussion of Catequil (in Bray). Several accounts mention that the Inca purposely moved items including sand from the ocean and other soils from many regions to Cusco, and vice versa, to connect places within the empire. Nicholas Branch, Millena Frouin, Rob Kemp, Nathalie Marini, Frank Meddens, Chiwetazulu Onuora, and Barbara Silva; McEwan; and Francisco Ferreira report finding layers of soil, presumably from different regions, in the construction of platform

monuments, which likely represent this practice (in Meddens et al.). Given Andean ontology, stones and soils (among other things) were powerful tools in the Inca imperial project and might be used to constitute an Inca-dominated sacred geography.

These Andean volumes, taken together, do a great deal to advance our understanding of Inca cosmology and ontology, as well as how these ideas impacted imperial strategies and the daily lives of people as they engaged the landscape full of place-persons. Yet it remains to be seen and substantiated how many of these concepts or related beliefs might have been more widely held in the Andes or in earlier periods. The challenges of elucidating an emic perspective is evidenced by Brosseder's study. Thus it is very important, as explorations of emic understandings regarding religion, cosmology, and ontology proceed, that such investigations continue to rely heavily on tangible and patterned elements of place evident in the archaeological record. Studies in Mesoamerica have made greater progress in this regard because of a larger corpus of representational art, specifically that which can be linked to place. I suggest that Andean scholars can build on the progress made by the contributors to the publications reviewed here by continued focus on the features of place and representations of place in the prehistoric past.

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